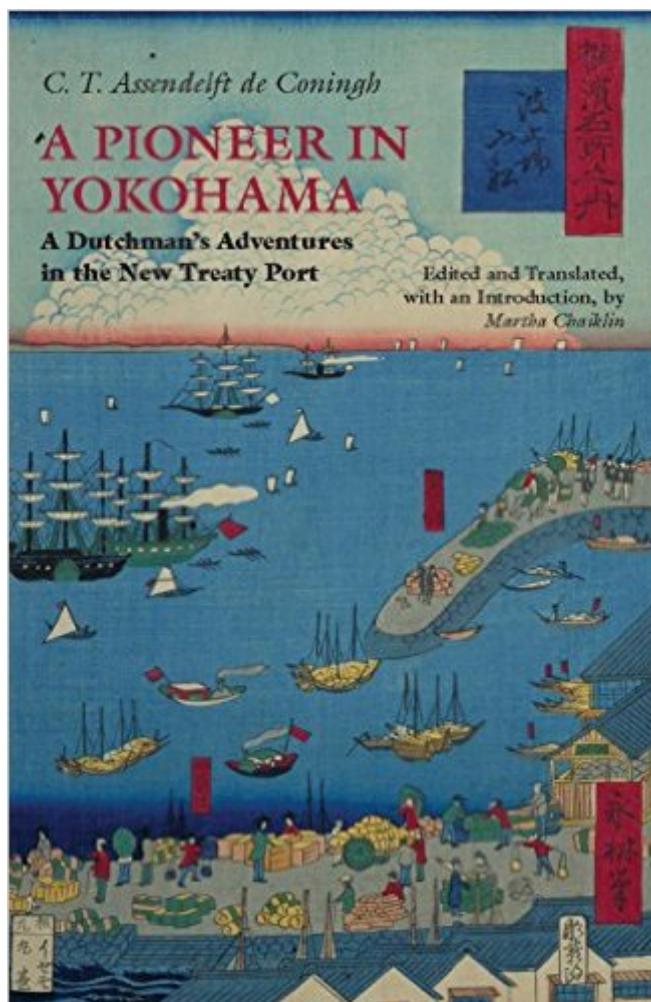


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A Pioneer In Yokohama: A Dutchman's Adventures In The New Treaty Port (Hackett Classics)



Synopsis

In relating the story of his life on the island of Deshima and in the port of Yokohama during the late 1850s, Dutch merchant C. T. Assendelft de Coningh provides both an unprecedented eyewitness account of daily life in the Japanese treaty ports and a unique perspective on the economic, military, and political forces the Western imperial powers brought to bear on newly opened Japan. A general Introduction provides essential historical and cultural background as well as a brief biography of De Coningh; substantial footnotes explain those terms, names, and cultural references that may be unfamiliar to modern readers. Thirteen illustrations are included, as are a chronology of events, a bibliography, and an index.

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Customer Reviews

Martha Chaiklin's translation of a little-known Dutchman's adventures in Japan provides a unique glimpse into the early years of the opening of Japan's ports to Western merchants. With an erudite introduction and well-researched notes, this work bring to life the turbulent, rowdy, and precarious existence of the budding foreign settlement of Yokohama. De Coningh's depictions of the people in Yokohama are colorful but balanced, both for the various foreigners and the Japanese he interacted with. From his description of the gruesome murder of a fellow Dutchman to the fanfare surrounding

the arrival of the first "Western" woman in the port, De Coningh's narrative entertains the reader as his lively prose immerses us in the life of this treaty port of a century and half ago.

A Pioneer in Yokohama was a delightful surprise. Having read The Thousand Summers of Jacob de Zoet, which took place in an earlier period of the Dutch stay in Japan, I found A Pioneer in Yokohama added a new dimension to the picture portrayed in The Thousand Summers. De Coningh, the author of the memoir, is an artful storyteller with an attractive personality, who treats all nationalities honestly. Unlike the typical Western attitude towards non-Westerners, his is one of respect for Japanese culture and people. His stories of his time on Yokohama are lively and full of interesting information. Chaiklin's translation is excellent, and her scholarship thorough.

As a non-historian I found this book an exciting work of scholarship. To tell this tale of a Dutch trader's experience in Yokohama Martha Chaiklin had to master Old Dutch, know Japanese and show great diligence in checking out names and other obscure words and references. This is an exciting tale of one of the early traders with Japan. It tells you what goods were considered important by the Japanese and shows the dangers this trader experienced from the Japanese and from other western traders. One of the more interesting aspects of the book are his observations about human nature and the politics of the times.

Interested Reader
Dry, rigid, thick. All words that describe a usual history book, but not that describe "A Pioneer in Yokohama". Among the many historical books and references I've read, this one in particular stands out as a entirely different kind. A true first hand account into a time period past. All information is direct from the source and the original authors experiences are echoed in this translation, apart from just his words. Works like a primary source, but a lot less dry, interesting to say the least, having a history book that conveys all its knowledge, while reading like a novel.

Great book

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